

pected by ensuring the greatest possible flexibility. Experience proves that a single headquarters—representing all the military, diplomatic, private, public, national, and international agencies involved—must provide central control for disaster relief. Otherwise, dispersion of authority will cause both duplication of effort and tragic omissions. Yet, at the same time, the military must remain sensitive to the particular interests and contributions of all. In Bangladesh, for example, the U.S. commander at the scene was part of an ad hoc coalition of national and international agencies that worked cooperatively and effectively to save tens of thousands of people from further suffering or death.

No planning should shackle the military commander with either bureaucratic or chain-of-command requirements that will unnecessarily slow down the flow of humanitarian work. Every commander susceptible to disaster relief missions should be confident before he is called into action that, as in war, his command responsibility and reasonable exercise of dis-

cretion at the scene will be the keys to success.

- *Force Readiness.* Just as the Marine Corps serves the Nation as its force-in-readiness, so is the success of humanitarian relief missions dependent upon forces-in-readiness. In fact, the expeditionary nature of the Corps renders it uniquely qualified to launch such operations.

The job of bringing together personnel from disparate and distant units and different Services requires special command attention. But without the benefit of a variety of experts from many sources, mission accomplishment in humanitarian relief would be more difficult than necessary. Marine commands liable for commitment to these missions must plan for the integration of these elements into their structure and/or for furnishing Marine elements that can provide an essential capability to another force assigned a humanitarian mission.

True readiness can only exist when a force has anticipated a mission and then planned, trained, and prepared for its execution. In the case of hu-

manitarian missions, lives depend on rapid response; timing is critical; preparation is key. These essential preparations must be thorough, and they must be accomplished without detracting from the organization's overall readiness to carry out its primary military functions.

From the 1990s into the 21st century, humanitarian intervention and disaster relief missions are foreseeably the most challenging, but the most rewarding, operations on the horizon for the military. The investment of precious shrinking defense dollars to assist victims of earthquakes or anarchy in far-off lands serves well the traditions and roles of the world's most powerful Nation and its armed forces.



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## The 24th MEU(SOC) and Operation PROVIDE COMFORT: A Second Look

by LtCol Gordon W. Rudd, USA

*The process by which a MAGTF can be expanded from battalion to brigade size takes on whole new dimensions when the augmenting force involves U.S. Army or allied units.*

In the November 1991 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette*, BGen (then Col) James L. Jones provided a detailed article on the role of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operation Capable), or 24th MEU(SOC), in support of Operations PROVIDE COMFORT in northern Iraq. This article included contributions by the MEU's three subordinate commanders. It was a detailed, accurate, and appropriate article describing the crucial contribution of the 24th MEU(SOC). Perhaps it is time to reflect upon some of the broader issues raised by this operation.

As Gen Jones described, the 24th MEU(SOC) deployed 400 miles overland to become the first conventional force to enter Northern Iraq. The mission was to assist a coalition effort to

save the Kurds that Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Army had driven into the mountains along the Turkish border. BGen Anthony Zinni, then PROVIDE COMFORT's chief of staff, defined this effort as humanitarian intervention, a term that captures a future role for American and allied military forces in a new world order.

Other than deploying from the Mediterranean, there is little about PROVIDE COMFORT that exercised the amphibious role normally associated with a MEU. Even much of the sustainment for the MEU during this operation came overland from U.S. Army and Air Force units. Perhaps the most profound contribution of the 24th MEU to the operation came from the base it provided—an operational base upon

which a much larger force, a joint task force, and then a combined task force, were quickly built.

When U.S. Army MajGen Jay Garner arrived to assume control of the American and coalition forces in northern Iraq, it became known as Joint Task Force Bravo, a force that increased to almost divisional size, he had no staff to exercise command and control of arriving forces. To provide a substitute staff for this role, Gen Jones offered Gen Garner the use of the MEU staff. As a British Marine battalion and the U.S. Army's 3-325 Airborne Infantry Battalion Combat Team (3-325 Inf) arrived from its base in Italy, the MEU staff assumed control of these forces, enabling them to form an operational maneuver brigade for the

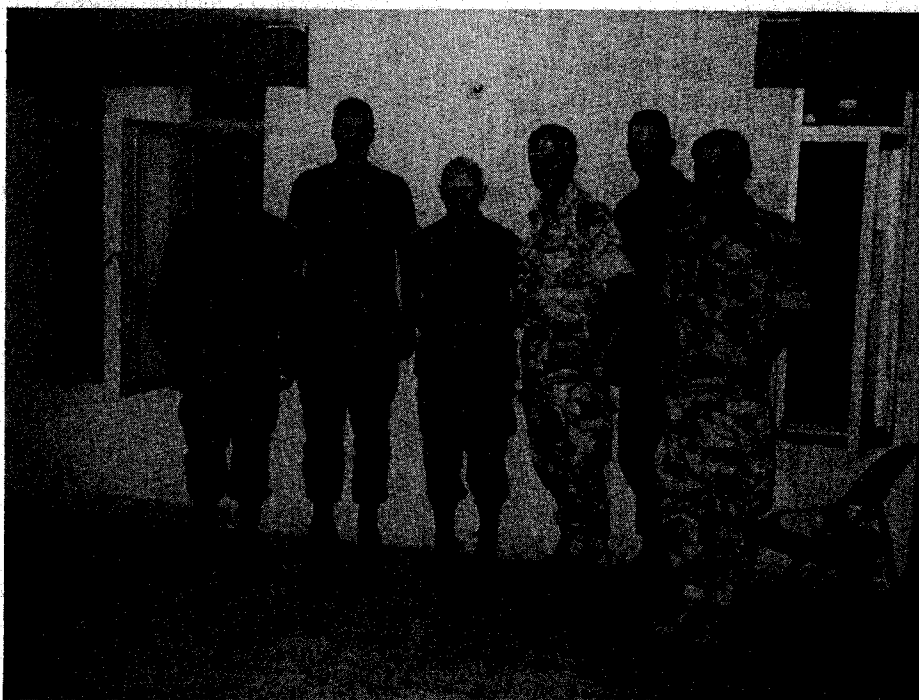
initial phases of the intervention into Iraq.

As the American and coalition forces expanded still further and Gen Garner established a coalition staff composed mostly of Army officers from U.S. European Command, Gen Jones recovered control of his MEU staff. However, the MEU remained reinforced with the 3-325 Inf for a significant period, allowing it to retain its role as a maneuver brigade with two infantry battalion teams. Throughout his assignment with Joint Task Force Bravo, Gen Jones was considered a brigade commander by the American and coalition members.

Perhaps this position might not seem so remarkable for Marines and others well grounded in the roles of the MAGTF. But to most Army officers, a maneuver brigade assumes a headquarters controlling two or more infantry or armor battalions. Consequently, a MAGTF consisting of a single battalion landing team, a composite rotary-wing squadron, and a service support component does not automatically come across as a maneuver brigade. Marines know better because conceptually all MEUs should be able to assume control of additional infantry battalions with appropriate combat and service support, not to mention additional aviation assets. And, of course, all Marines know that continued extension of this concept leads to the formation of a Marine expeditionary brigade (MEB), but the normal model for a MEB assumes expansion with U.S. Marine forces, not Army or allied assets.

Additional Marine combat units may have had difficulty deploying to Operation PROVIDE COMFORT given the Marine contribution to Operation DESERT STORM during the same period. Another reason was the use of Army rather than Marine infantry and support units in northern Iraq. Under the current system, the commander-in-chief (CinC) of a unified command will normally rely upon his own assets for missions assigned to him before asking for the assets of another command. Compliance with this concept during PROVIDE COMFORT led to reinforcement with more Army rather than Marine combat or support units.

PROVIDE COMFORT came under the control of commander, U.S. European Command (EuCom), with Turkey, a



*The Allied coalition leaders who were first involved in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in northern Iraq in April 1991: (Left to Right) LtCol John Abizaid, USA, CO, 3-325 Inf; Col (Now BGen) James L. Jones, CO, 24th MEU(SOC); MajGen Jay Garner, USA, CG, Task Force Bravo; LtCol Lees Van Egmond, Royal Marines Holland, CO, 1st ACG; LtCol Tony L. Corwin, CO, BLT 2/8; LtCol Jonathan Thompson, British Royal Marines, CO, 45 Commando.*

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally, as the forward operational base. EuCom controls all American armed forces in the European Theater including the Navy's Sixth Fleet, which normally includes one MEU(SOC). Once the 24th MEU was committed, EuCom had no other Marine combat units for reinforcement and relied upon the use of Army units. EuCom's Army units proved satisfactory for this role as the mission in northern Iraq was not amphibious in nature.

For political reasons PROVIDE COMFORT became a coalition effort and just as the MEU was reinforced with an Army unit making it in essence a joint task force, the addition of a Royal Marine battalion (commando) made it a combined task force. Although the British force was soon reassigned with the arrival of the 3d Commando Brigade Headquarters, there is little doubt that the MEU could have continued to control all three infantry battalion teams, U.S. Marine, U.S. Army, and Royal Marine. But continued control and sustainment would have placed a strain on the MEU staff and support assets.

During the process of expanding a MEU into a MEB, the overall command element would normally be re-

inforced to provide larger staff and communication assets. With the normal alignment of an artillery battery with each infantry battalion team, an increase in the number of battalion teams demands a larger command and control unit to exploit the artillery units. Ideally this would be an artillery battalion headquarters, but at a minimum it should also be an expanded fire control cell within an expanded MEU headquarters. To sustain multiple maneuver battalions, the MEU's service support element should also be expanded. Additional staff and support elements would also be required if the MEU's aviation component was expanded.

During PROVIDE COMFORT, the 24th MEU received little or no additional staff, communications, or service support elements to control its attached battalions. The low tempo of PROVIDE COMFORT did not force this issue and the 24th MEU assumed the overload without mishap. But what if the tempo had been higher, including sustained combat operations? The overload issue could have become critical for a lean MEU headquarters acting as an operational brigade headquarters with a staff and service support designed for a single battalion landing team



and a single squadron.

The obvious solution would be appropriate augmentation from the higher Marine unit from which the MEU was formed, in this case from the 2d Marine Division or II Marine Expeditionary Force. Such assets may have been available as DESERT STORM ended and PROVIDE COMFORT began. But what if DESERT STORM had lasted longer? The precedent established during PROVIDE COMFORT warrants additional study.

The expansion of the MEU with additional, cohesive, battalion teams established it as both a joint and combined brigade task force; however, the MEU staff was never sufficiently augmented, beyond liaison officers, to be considered a joint or combined staff. Certainly a larger Marine staff, approaching the size of a MEB staff, could have properly controlled a joint or combined task force without becoming a fully balanced joint or com-

bined staff. The advantages of a staff from a single Service include cohesion and a single doctrine. Liaison officers could assist with the difference of non-Marine maneuver or support units. On the other hand, if Marine resources to expand the MEU staff into a normal MEB staff are unavailable, then the MEU staff could be augmented with additional officers from non-Marine sources to make it a joint or combined staff. Both concepts for a mixed maneuver force have advantages and disadvantages. Both deserve further study.

The MAGTF has a crucial role to play within America's developing unified command structure, particularly as the American force structure is reduced. It provides each CinC an exceptionally valuable command and control headquarters. The use of an expanded MAGTF as a joint or combined task force is no longer novel. It

is one of the fastest deployable bases upon which to build a deploying, multidimensional force capable of going into combat or participating in a humanitarian crisis. But it requires more consideration than merely assuming command of attached units from other Services, American or allied. Operation PROVIDE COMFORT confirmed previous precedents and set some new ones. For this and its remarkable success, it remains worthy of our attention. But with the alteration of just one or two variables, the tempo could have been much higher and the stress much greater. A study of PROVIDE COMFORT should include altering these variables and addressing the consequences.



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## Marine Corps Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Operations

by Capt Gerald F. Nalepa, USMCR

*After-action reports available through the Marine Corps Lessons Learned System provide a wealth of insight into the humanitarian and disaster relief operations that seem to be acquiring greater importance in the post-Cold War era.*

With the end of the Cold War the Marine Corps, always a flexible force, will have to increase its ability to respond to a widening array of mission assignments despite shrinking resources. This increased flexibility has already been demonstrated in recent humanitarian and disaster relief operations (including restoration of civil order) in northern Iraq, Los Angeles, south Florida, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and most recently Somalia. Although each operation has had unique requirements, a review of situation and after-action reports reflects common problems that faced each commander. Because the Marine Corps can expect an increase in these types of mission assignments, it is important that commanders begin to exercise their staffs in the unique aspects of humanitarian

and disaster relief operations.

This article will focus on similarities among recent missions, how commanders on the scene handled problems encountered, and how future commanders may address these issues prior to entering a humanitarian or disaster relief operation. Data for this article was gathered from unit after-action reports submitted under the Marine Corps Lessons Learned System (MCLS). A more in-depth examination of the issues specific to each operation can be found in the reports submitted to MCLS.

### Common Threads

In each of the operations reviewed, reoccurring themes emerged. After-action reports stress many items that units "wished they had thought of

earlier." Commanders can expect communications and logistics to be especially hard pressed. Creative use of assets on hand can help a unit overcome initial shortfalls in service to civilians.

**Duration of Operations.** In each operation reviewed, units underestimated the time they would be deployed in the area of operations. This led to Marines not properly packing sufficient hygiene and personal care items for the mission. It also led to an underestimate of logistic requirements and equipment repair items needed to conduct sustained field operations. A commander can expect relief operations to last weeks and months, not days. Because of the urgent nature of these mission assignments, an overestimate in the planning stage is recommended. In a combat environment,